DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 197 852 PS 012 006

TITLE A Handbook on How to Involve Parents in School Activities: Hawaii Follow Through Project.
INSTITUTION Hawaii State Dept. of Education, Honolulu. Office of Instructional Services.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 21p.: For related document, see PS 011 908.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Class Activities; Elementary Schools; *Field Trips; Guidelines; Kindergarten; *Parent Participation; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Parent Workshops; *Policy Formation; *Primary Education
IDENTIFIERS Hawaii; Project Follow Through

ABSTRACT

This handbook on how to involve parents in school activities, includes ideas and techniques which were used by Hawaii's kindergarten and elementary school teachers to (1) help parents understand how learning takes place; (2) provide parents with opportunities to observe and participate in classroom activites; and (3) work with parents and reinforce their efforts towards educating their children. Descriptions of the ideas and techniques used by the teachers are given. Included is information on "getting acquainted" sessions such as a coffee hour for parents, an open house, workshop classes, invitations to individual parents to visit classrooms, and luncheon meetings; field trips; utilizing parent resources in the classroom; and establishing a parent advisory council. (Author/MP)

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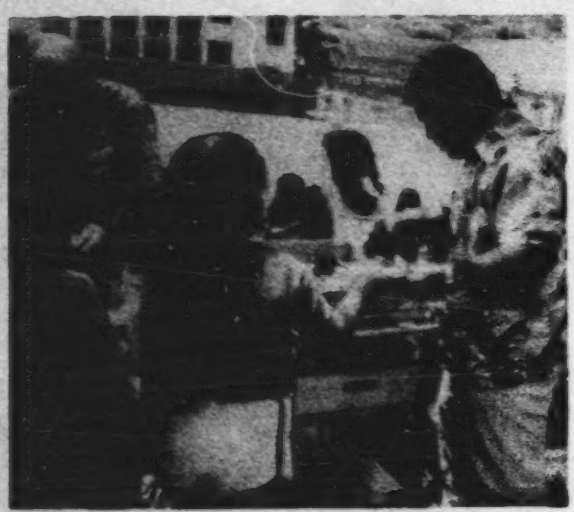
A HANDBOOK ON HOW TO INVOLVE PARENTS IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

HAWAII FOLLOW THROUGH PROJECT



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OFFICE OF INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES
FOLLOW THROUGH PROJECT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STATE OF HAWAII
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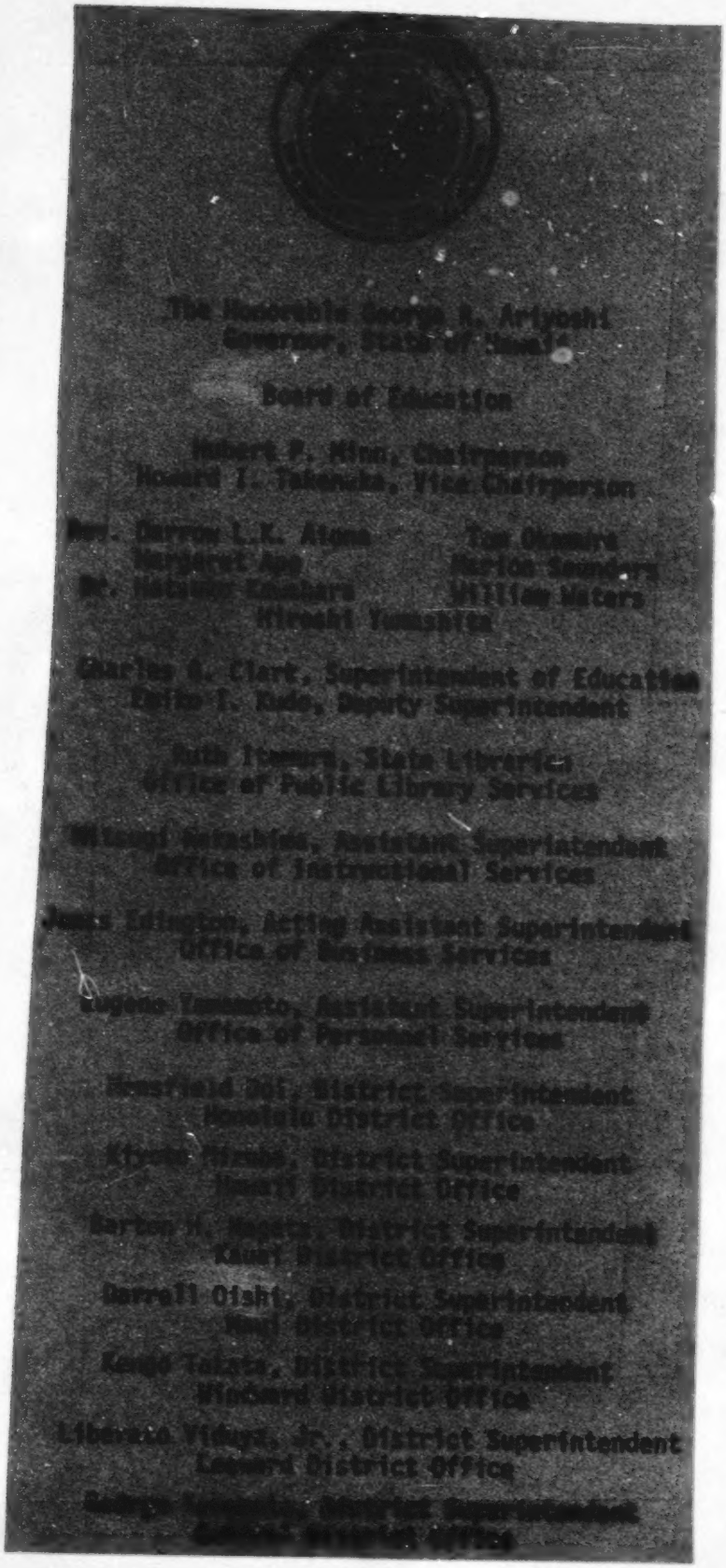

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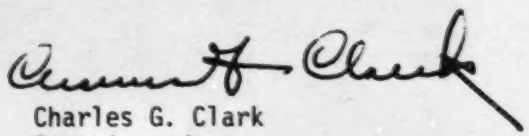
FOREWORD

It is an important mission of the Hawaii State Department of Education to provide effective education to Hawaii's youngsters with the cooperation and support of parents. This handbook on parent involvement is indicative of the Department's efforts toward experimenting and determining ways in which parents could participate effectively in school matters, contributing ideas and services and learning how to support their youngsters' learning process at home.

This handbook is distributed to all elementary schools with the hope that increased sharing of educational responsibility by both parents and school personnel could become a reality for all schools.



Charles G. Clark
Superintendent

PREFACE

This handbook, "How to Involve Parents in School Activities," is a first follow up of an earlier April 1977 publication of Hawaii's Follow Through project titled "Parents as Partners in Education" which provides general information about parent involvement. This handbook reflects Follow Through project efforts to develop model procedures which could be replicated at other schools to involve parents effectively in school activities and to help them grow into their role as partners with the classroom teacher in educating their children.

Various techniques have been tried over the last ten years to make contacts with parents, to talk to them, and to invite them to school for participation in workshops and classroom activities. Techniques have been tried to help parents in their personal and career development as well as to better understand how their children learn in school and to participate in policy making/decision making from the school to the state legislative levels.

There is much evidence of effectiveness of our Follow Through techniques. Attendance at classroom "open houses," parent advisory council meetings, parent volunteer work sessions, parent workshops, and other school activities is consistently reliable in numbers and quality of participation. Follow Through parents represent the largest proportion of parents present at related school meetings. They respond in good numbers at legislative hearings on Follow Through. Qualities of confidence, commitment, knowledge, and skills have grown to be commendable according to observations of guests at parent Policy Advisory Council meetings.

It is the purpose of this handbook to help other schools and teacher-parent groups try some of our Follow Through techniques. Some of the techniques presented in this handbook may already be familiar to the teachers.

Our two Visiting Teachers, Arleen Taguchi and Eloise Miyasaki, have worked diligently at preparing this handbook. They have a very rich background of knowledge and techniques for involving parents in school activities. This handbook reflects their long efforts in experimenting with parent involvement techniques working cooperatively with teachers, educational assistants, and principals involved in the Follow Through project.

INTRODUCTION

It is recognized that parents have an important role in their children's education. Where parents are actively involved in their child's education, learning is looked upon as a continuous process in the school and home.

The goal in Follow Through is "Parents as Partners in Education." To meet this goal, kindergarten to third grade teachers and educational assistants at Kaewai, Kaiulani, and Palolo Schools have been trying to involve parents in their classroom activities. This handbook reflects their efforts in (1) helping parents understand how learning takes place, (2) providing parents with opportunities to observe and participate in classroom activities, (3) getting to know their parents, and (4) working with parents and reinforcing their efforts towards educating their children.

This handbook includes ideas and techniques for involving parents in:

A. Getting Acquainted Sessions

B. Field Trips

C. Classrooms

D. School Policy Advisory Committees

IDEAS AND TECHNIQUES

A. GETTING ACQUAINTED SESSIONS

It is our belief that whatever teachers can do to personalize the parent-teacher relationship will contribute towards more effective teaching. Coffee hours and informal talk sessions are planned by teachers to develop positive parent-teacher relationships.

1. Planning a Coffee Hour for Parents

Teachers and children write invitations to parents with an RSVP or tear-sheet to obtain timely responses from the parents. Follow-up telephone calls are made to encourage and confirm attendance.

The coffee hour is planned with room mothers and others who are available to help in planning. Planning details include: (1) deciding on the most convenient time and length of the activity, (2) providing for the supervision of children during the coffee hour, (3) getting refreshments prepared (children could prepare simple refreshments as part of a cooking activity or parents and children could prepare refreshments together in relation to a study about different foods), and (4) deciding on the specific objectives of the coffee hour, whether to have an informal discussion on a specific topic or to plan for a special parents' visitation to the classroom, etc.

Parents at a coffee hour are involved in planning for their workshops of interest to them. A variety of workshops have been conducted with success so far. Refer to a summary list at the end of this handbook.

After the coffee hours, teachers and children send thank you notes to the parents. Additional informal notes pertinent to the coffee hour results are sent by teachers to the parents. This kind of informality contributes to the development of a comfortable working relationship between parents and teachers.

2. Open House

Teachers and children invite parents to visit the classroom. Children show parents around the classroom pointing out to them what they do in school. Teachers informally talk to parents.

After parents observe the classroom, the class presents a short program, an outgrowth of class activities, including a poem, story or song learned in class. Teachers explain their class program, activities for the year, and where parent help is needed. Parents also have an opportunity to ask questions or make comments.

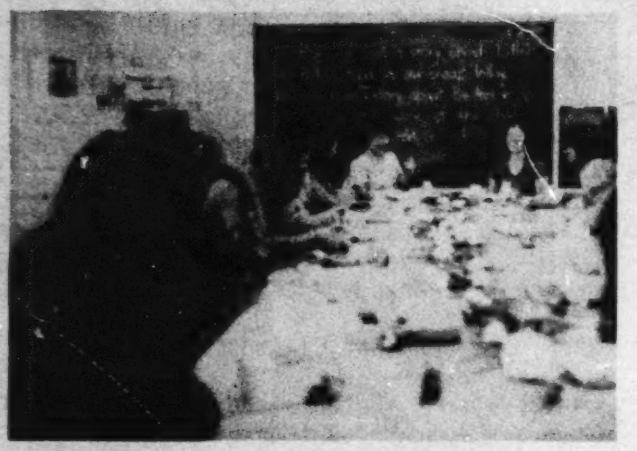
3. Workshop Classes

Parents and teachers get acquainted by participating in workshops together. Workshop topics could be school or non-school related. Productive relationships are developed when parents and teachers attend workshops together on school-related topics such as "research skills for children." Teachers and parents tend to become interested and motivated together in helping the children. Refer to the end of this handbook for a summary list of workshops conducted with success so far for the parents; included also is a list of local manpower resources for conducting workshops for parents. See Appendices A and B.

4. Invitations to Individual Parents to Visit Classrooms

Teachers invite parents to classrooms to observe or assist in the classroom. Parents are more apt to ask teachers questions on a one-to-one basis; they develop more lasting acquaintances at the same time. Commitments are developed together to meet childrens' needs.

5. Luncheon Meetings



Parents and teachers meet over lunch and discuss the class program and ways parents can help in the classroom. A pot-luck luncheon or dessert party may be appropriate for parents of some schools. PTA's could subsidize such parent activities. As personal relationships are developed, commitments for parent involvement follow more readily.

B. FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an important part of the classroom curriculum. Parents play an important role in making field trips more meaningful to children. Parents can learn about a field trip as an instructional activity and become teaching parents in this activity.

Teachers find materials in the children's environment that children can comprehend, assimilate, and utilize for learning purposes. Teachers believe in the concept of taking children out of classrooms and into the community on field trips for a study of some aspect of living and about their environment.

Parents' presence and participation in field trips make it possible for teachers to work with children in small groups. Parents take part in the field trip as teaching partners and not as "supervisors" only. The following are "Steps to Get Parents Involved on a Field Trip."

Before The Trip

1. Teachers send invitations to parents; or children often write notes themselves to invite parents to a field trip. An RSVP or a tear-sheet for confirmation of attendance is included to get parent responses. Invitations are followed up with telephone calls to encourage and confirm attendance. See Appendix C.

2. After parents respond, teachers assign children to small groups. Name tags by color, animal cutouts, etc., are prepared ahead of time for each group.

Parents help plan follow-up activites in the classroom. After a field trip to the zoo, parents may assist in the following activities: (a) making puppets, dioramas, collages, (b) making zoo books, and (c) working out creative movements.

3. Teachers plan a "trip orientation" with parents prior to the field trip to go over the "tripboard," rules and regulations and other pertinent information. See Appendix D.

On The Trip

1. Adult group leaders escort their group to the bus and sit together with their group of children. As the bus proceeds on the pre-determined route, parents work on the tripboards with children and discuss other interesting happenings as they occur.

2. At the site, parents are responsible for their respective group and follow the official guide if available. If no guide is on site, parents serve as guides for their assigned groups.

Lunch Time

1. Parents, children, and teachers have lunch together and get better acquainted.

2. Sack lunches prepared by the school cafeteria or packaged home lunches are served.

After The Trip

1. Parents meet with children and evaluate their field trip. Highlights are listed. Tripboards are completed.

2. Parents meet with teachers and evaluate the field trip.

C. PARENTS AS RESOURCES IN THE CLASSROOM

A great deal of interaction and continuity of relationships between parents and those who work with their children in school have been found to be effective. Familiarity, ease, trust, and confidence are developed in parent-teacher relationships that are nurtured long enough. Parents are accepted in classrooms with ease and trust after long enough acquaintances and relationships. There is no doubt in the merits of parents joining forces with teachers in educating their children to become productive citizens.

By having parents volunteer in the classroom, the children learn that their parents care and are interested in what they do in school. Parents with special skills are able to supplement classroom instruction serving as resource persons. Every effort is made to capitalize on skills and talents of parents.

Throughout the school year, parents volunteer their time and talents in the classroom in various ways. Parents are invited to become "instructors" in the classroom. Example, in connection with a study on Samoa, parents share their "know-how" with the children, either in small or large groups. The following is an outline of sample classroom topics and activities for utilizing parent resources in the classroom.

A. Ethnic Unit of Study: Samoa

1. Customs

   a. Dress
   b. Food
   c. Traditions and Holidays

2. Arts and Crafts

   a. Music
   b. Dance
   c. Tapa making, weaving, etc.

3. Geography

   a. What is an island?
   b. Climate
   c. Location in relation to Hawaii

4. Life in Samoa vs. Life in Hawaii

   a. Education
   b. Transportation
   c. Housing
   d. Recreation

B. Program Preparation

1. Teaching a song/dance

2. Costume making

3. Props

C. Other Areas of Study

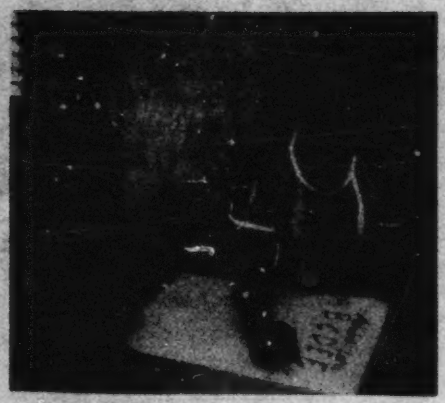
1. Reading/telling stories to children: flannel-graphs, shadowgraphs, puppets, etc.

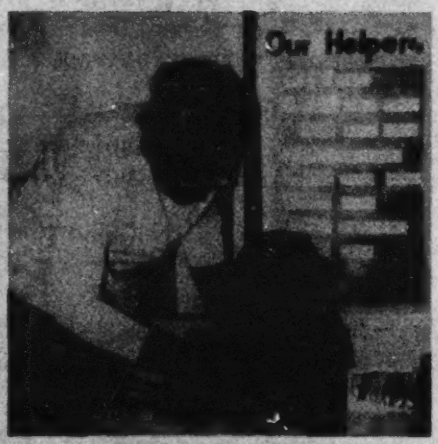
2. Making learning games

3. Tutoring children

4. Assisting with Physical Education activities

5. Teaching Arts and Crafts





D. SCHOOL POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Trusting relationships between parents and school personnel can be more readily developed through involving parents in policy-making, advisory, and decision-making activities. The Follow Through project started ten years ago with the requirement of establishing a Parent Advisory Council (PAC). It was a new and difficult experience for parents to take leadership roles in conducting monthly council meetings and to deliberate over project matters. Over the years, however, parents have grown into their leadership roles. Maintenance of PAC has helped parents develop a feeling of confidence that they are vital to the operation of a nationally involved project. Evident is the school personnel's respect and appreciation of PAC and parents' leadership. A significant outgrowth of PAC activities is the development of parents' personal and leadership qualities.

Suggestions and Procedures for Involving Parents

1. Roles

   Identify a small part of the total school program that parents could start learning about and to participate in. No matter how small the part, it is important that the role remains significant for policy-making/decision making/advising. Significance of the role is critical to the success of motivating and involving parents effectively and continually.

2. Numbers

   If it is feasible to organize only a single school-wide policy-making advisory committee, parents could be involved in sub-committees of such a major committee. A single school-wide committee would not have the sufficient number of membership slots for parents; by having sub-committees, more parents could be involved in ways that are sufficiently significant. There is strength in numbers of participants for parent involvement purposes. Numbers help parents to develop confidence and willingness to present themselves.

3. Training

   Persistence of optimism and training of parents are crucial to long-range effectiveness of parent involvement efforts on the part of school personnel and parents. Sensitive guidance of parents is necessary for training parents in policy-making and advisory roles. External experts and consultants could be involved to provide sessions on learning how to conduct meetings, how to lobby, how to prepare and process testimonies, etc.

4. Recruitment

Select parents known and recommended by teachers and administrators to serve as primary contact persons/coordinators. Such persons can help in the following ways:

1) Send letters to parents explaining the need for participation and their proposed roles and functions. Invite them to meet with school personnel for further clarification.

2) Involve parents in nominations of committee membership and officer positions.

3) Meet with parents personally and informally to introduce and interest individual parents in participating in policy advisory commitee work.

5. Participation

1) Designate either school personnel or volunteer parents to serve as continuing contact persons with parents. Make persistent contacts with parents to notify about meeting agendas, dates, and plans. Phone, mail, etc.

2) Provide transportation to bring parents to meetings as needed especially when meetings are held off campus.

6. Publicity

To keep parents encouraged, motivated, and interested in participating in school activities, and to give credit where due provide as many opportunities as possible for publicizing their contributions. Work towards public television presentations, news articles, and departmental publication.

Parents could also be guided into organizing their own monthly or quarterly news bulletin. They could select among themselves those who can edit, type, and help in the distribution process. News articles could be contributed by any parent; criteria will be needed to determine how articles should be selected for inclusion in the news bulletin. A regular office/work space for the parents would be helpful. Workshops could be set up to help parents learn about news writing and preparation of publications. This kind of systematic parent involvement could help parents develop and/or update skills that may enable them to pursue related occupational careers.

Suggestions for Various Parent Training Workshops

In order for parents to become effective partners in education, they need to be provided a variety of experiences to understand the classroom. The Follow Through Program provides parents opportunities to observe, participate in classroom activities, and take training workshops. Some of the workshops are listed below:

1. Workshops on understanding the classroom:

    a. HEP (Hawaii English Program): introduction to the program and its components
    b. Use of cuisennaire rods
    c. Mathematics taught in school
    d. Understanding the metric system
    e. Working with clay
    f. Understanding the stages of development in painting

2. Workshops to prepare parents to work in the classroom:

    a. Workshop on "volunteers" in the classroom
    b. Cooking in the classroom with children: developing language and the basic skills through cooking
    c. Reading stories to children and storytelling
    d. Research activities with children
    e. Developing math and reading games
    f. Bookmaking: writing stories with children and/or taking dictated stories and binding them into hardcover books
    g. Field trips: understanding the value of parents' participation in field trips

3. Training workshops to help parents develop skills and techniques in helping their children at home so that they become better learners and enrich the home environment for children

    a. Sessions on child development

        - Understanding your child: stages of development
        - Your child and school
        - Parent-child interaction
        - Interpersonal relationships

    b. The parent as the "instructor"

        - Learning about toys and games for children
        - Visiting the library and becoming familiar with the services and materials available
        - Making TV viewing a learning experience for children

APPENDIX A
LIST OF PARENT WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES

Parent workshops and activities have been pursued with specific goals in mind including: (1) active involvement of parents in HPAC (Hawaii Policy Advisory Committee), (2) parents' personal development, (3) parents understanding the classroom instructional process, and (4) parents becoming "instructors" in the home.

Listed below in relation to goals are some of the workshops we have tried over the years and which may be appropriate to your school setting for parent involvement purposes.

A. HPAC: To develop a PAC to get greater parent participation, a closer and more meaningful relationship between the home and school, and more leadership among parents.

   1. Orientation of PAC members: roles and responsibilities of representatives.

   2. District Superintendent: presentation on the importance of Parent Involvement and the role of parents in school.

   3. Cultures of Ethnic Groups: to gain understanding of families of different ethnic backgrounds.

   4. Community and/or state resource speaker: to familiarize parents with available community resource speakers.

B. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT: To provide parents with the opportunity to participate in educational and community activities for self-improvement.

   1. Recreational:

      a. Hawaiiana: hula, ukulele, Hawaiian quilting, and making implements.
      b. Physical fitness: sewing, bowling, volleyball, slimnastics.
      c. Crafts: tie-dyeing, macrame, ceramics, knitting, and crocheting.

   2. Vocational:

      a. GED (General Education Diploma)
      b. Sewing
      c. Cooking/Nutrition
      d. Metrics

APPENDIX B

RESOURCES UTILIZED FOR PARENT WORKSHOPS AND ACTIVITIES

Whenever possible, staff, teachers, and parent resources were utilized to conduct the workshops and activities. Listed below are community resources utilized for parent training.

Community School for Adults

Parks and Recreation

U.H., Cooperative Extension

Foundation for Culture and Arts

Red Cross

Hawaii Heart Association

Kalihi-Palama Walk-In Clinic

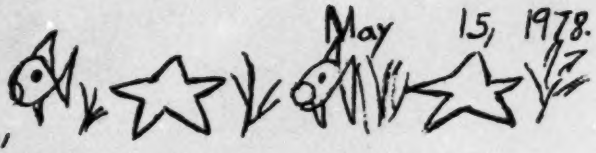
Susannah Wesley Family Power

DOE Personnel

State Library System

APPENDIX C

May 15, 1978.



Dear Parents,

We chartered a bus to go to the "Tide Pool" in Maili. We want to learn more about animals and plants that live in the tide pool. We would like to invite our parents to come with us.

Date: Tuesday, May 23, 1978
Time: 8:15 AM. to 11:15 AM.
Cost: Free

Thank you, Team 2
By: Roxane Ouchi

Drawing by: Garrett Santos

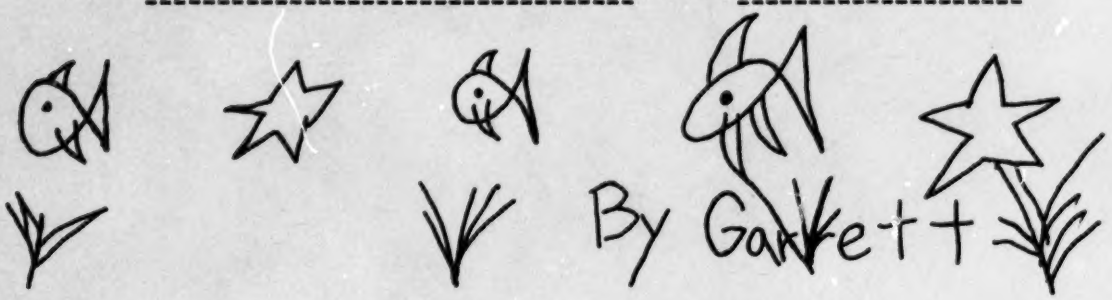
Page 2

Please return by May 17, 1978.

_____ I can go with the class to the Tide Pool.

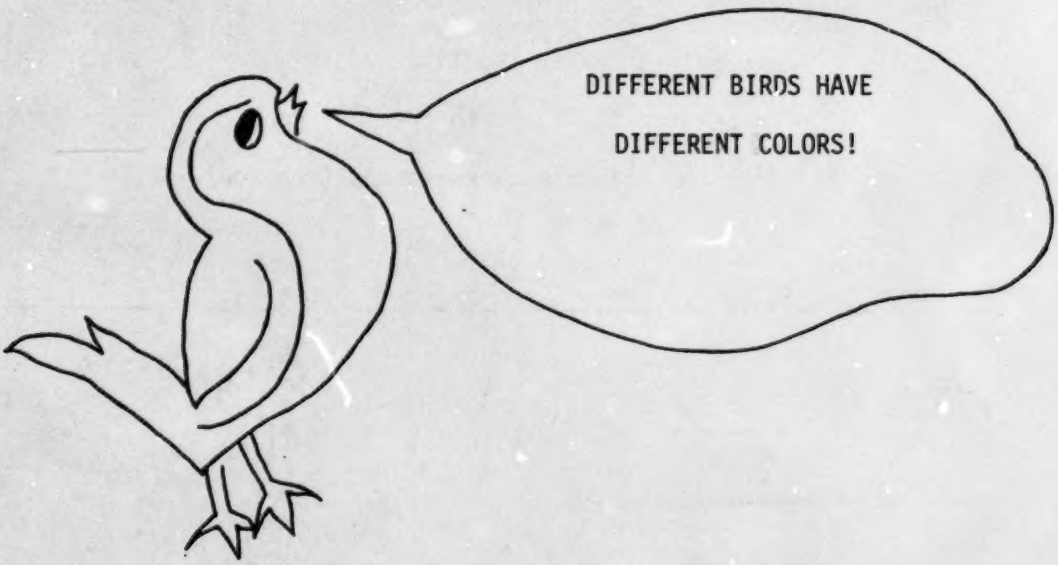
_____ I cannot go with the class to the Tide Pool.

Name_____ Phone_____



APPENDIX D

A PAGE FROM A SAMPLE "TRIPBOARD"



WHAT COLORS DO YOU SEE?

1. red ☐
2. yellow ☐
3. blue ☐
4. green ☐
5. orange ☐
6. purple ☐
7. brown ☐
8. black ☐
9. white ☐

Others:

_____

_____

_____